



## *Something Else*

David Hawley

Despite its mythical reputation for signifying purity, autonomy and self-criticality, abstract painting is so easily bastardised. A white square on a white ground can signify diametrically opposed intentions on the part of the artist. It can also simply become a design element for that cool minimal interior. Abstraction's 'artness' in recent times has become a little frayed at the edges.

*... painters continue to explore things like literalness and illusion (and their crossover)... because they don't expect to find one single solution... it's too much fun playing the game. (David Hawley)*

Breaking the rules, historically associated with a tradition of abstract painting, allows David Hawley to build on the affinity he feels for that tradition while making it relevant to the digital age. Playing with the stuff that categorises art and painting reflects more generally on our understanding of perception and material presence.

There are many different takes on non-objective or abstract art, from expressionist, transcendental, formalist, lyrical, materialist etc and it's as well to put Hawley's work into a context. There's a repetitive systematic basis to all his work. An interplay between a complex patterned structure built upon a simple curve and the specific instances of its rendering – the model and the reality as it were.

Although matter-of-fact materialism could best describe his work, formal problems are more likely to be suspended than resolved. The goal posts keep being moved; the clear delineation between what the work is and what it isn't has in this exhibition become vital. By doing away with the frame and fixing the colour to clear plastic the image hovers in an indeterminate space.

This compromises the formal autonomy of the works, as does the manipulation of the image through the mechanical intervention of the photocopier. Chance and artistic decision become virtually the same.

Surfaces move to and away from the picture plane in a narrow three-dimensional corridor between parallel flat surfaces. This sets up a dialogue, an optical interchange between layers of paint, figure and ground, and between the actual temporary layers of surface and shadow in this particular gallery.

There's an urgency to these works that binds you to their immediate physicality. This is in stark contrast to the world of digitally seamless images that fill our everyday lives: images that are of no actual material distinction; images reduced to differences of pixel density. The fear is that we are witnessing the diminution of sensibility through an imposed uniformity. *Something Else* at least gives us some more options.

Contemporary Art Services Tasmania